

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



SUSAN SERINO
41ST District

ALBANY OFFICE
ROOM 613
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
(518) 455-2945
HYDE PARK OFFICE
4254 ALBANY POST ROAD
HYDE PARK, NEW YORK 12538
(845) 229-0106
PUTNAM OFFICE
117 TOWN PARK LANE
PUTNAM VALLEY, NEW YORK 10579
(845) 528-0417

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
AGING
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, TOURISM, PARKS AND RECREATION

COMMITTEE MEMBER
FINANCE
INSURANCE
SOCIAL SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION

March 3, 2022

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senate Majority Leader
New York State Capitol
Room 330
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Robert G. Ort
Senate Minority Leader
New York State Capitol
Room 315
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Lyme One-House Budget

Dear Conference Leaders:

Despite the growing scourge of Lyme and tick-borne diseases (TBDs), express funding for critical initiatives to combat these devastating illnesses has once again been left out of the Executive Budget Proposal. Given the budget surplus the State is currently facing, this year it is especially imperative that we invest appropriate resources to tackle this issue head-on to mitigate years of underfunding. **As such, we respectfully request that the Senate takes the steps necessary to ensure that the final enacted State Budget includes a historic investment of \$1.5 million to be expressly dedicated to funding research, education and prevention initiatives to combat the spread of Lyme and TBDs.**

Historically, the State Senate has been a strong advocate for funding Lyme and TBDs initiatives. From 2015-2018, funding for such initiatives ranged from \$400,000 to a historic high of \$1 million in 2018, and has included \$250,000 each year since then—all of which has been funded in the State Budget by the Legislature. Reported cases of TBDs more than doubled in the United States from 2004 to 2016 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and this alarming trend requires that we match it with commensurate funding.

According to estimates by the CDC, nearly half a million people in the United States contract Lyme disease annually. Further, New York State has the unenviable position of ranking as the second highest total reported number of confirmed cases in the country in 2019, the most recent year for which CDC data is available. Given New York's position in the epicenter of the Lyme and TBDs outbreak, it is all the more important that New York leads the nation in the effort to combat these diseases.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it unique challenges—and exacerbated old challenges—spanning nearly every aspect of life, work and recreation, and the Lyme and TBDs epidemic is no exception. Many of the symptoms of Lyme and TBDs mimic those of other diseases, and they are similar to symptoms of COVID-19 as well. In addition, the pandemic shutdowns led to a surge in outdoor exploration by New Yorkers, especially by visitors from New York City. While this surge has been a great benefit for New Yorkers discovering the remarkable parks and trails our State has to offer and the communities they are visiting, it has also posed a risk as many new visitors are unfamiliar with the necessary precautions to prevent contracting TBDs. Because these diseases can, for some, result in lifelong health challenges if not addressed swiftly and effectively, ensuring individuals are able to enjoy all the outdoor amenities New York has to offer in a safe manner requires that we appropriately invest in initiatives to raise awareness and combat the spread of Lyme and TBDs.

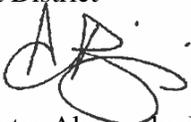
As such, we respectfully request that the Senate commits to ensuring the inclusion of \$1.5 million in the Senate One-House Budget, and ultimately, the Final Enacted State Budget, to fund Lyme and TBDs research, education and prevention initiatives.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to working with you on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Senator Sue Serino
41st District



Senator Alessandra Biaggi
34th District



Senator Phil Boyle
4th District



Senator Fred Akshar
52nd District



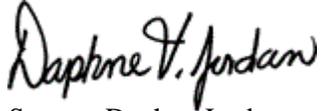
Senator George M. Borrello
57th District



Senator Patrick M. Gallivan
59th District



Senator Joseph A. Griffo
47th District



Senator Daphne Jordan
43rd District



Senator Mike Martucci
42nd District



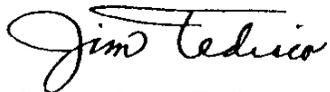
Senator Peter Oberacker
51st District



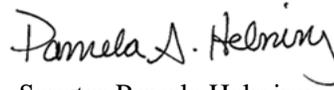
Senator Anthony H. Palumbo
1st District



Senator Patty Ritchie
48th District



Senator James Tedisco
49th District



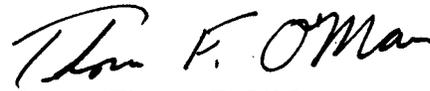
Senator Pamela Helming
54th District



Senator Andrew J. Lanza
24th District



Senator Mario R. Mattera
2nd District



Senator Thomas F. O'Mara
58th District



Senator Edward A. Rath III
61st District



Senator Daniel G. Stec
45th District



Senator Alexis Weik
3rd District